

Creativity: Live work create by Harriet Hawkins

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Harriet Hawkins

Creativity: Live, Work, Create

Oxon: Routledge, 2017. xiii + 394 pp., £28.99 paperback (ISBN 9781138813441), £76.50 hardback (ISBN 9781138813434)

In an age when creativity is being extolled as the 'oil of the twenty first century' (pp.6) – driver of international policy, redeemer of the economy, and pioneer of community – now, more than ever, it seems necessary to reflect upon the possibilities of a critical geography of creativity. *Creativity: Live, Work, Create* subsequently offers a timely interdisciplinary enquiry into the spatialities of creativity. The edited collection not only asks how creative production and consumption is shaped by geographical contexts, but also, points to creativities' role in transforming places and shaping subjects (pp.2). Formulated at the nexus of cultural economic geography, alongside art history and performance studies, this text interweaves academic and practitioner voices through numerous case-based vignettes. Developing upon influential thinkers as diverse as the Situationists, Florida, Said and Lefebvre, Hawkins' nine empirical chapters examine richly disparate, even conflicting, accounts of geographers' engagement with creativity.

Chapters 2, 3 and 4 tackle creativity as a 'socio-spatial practice'. In the foremost chapter, Hawkins deploys a series of creative bodies, tracing the embodied processes of 'becoming skilled' in glassblowing, and the micro-mobilities of dancers bodies. While cautious of glamorising the precarious creative entrepreneur, the chapter highlights geographer's rich conceptual interest in embodiment and how bodily creativities might invigorate methodological practice. Chapter 3 jumps scale to examine the places central to crafting practitioners' creative identity. Here, Hawkins traces the erosion and maintenance of curated spaces of specialist creative consumption, including the gallery, but also, artists' turn to site-specificity. In taking seriously such spaces, *Creativity* argues it is possible to challenge the figure of the lone artistic genius, and rather, see artists as entwined within complex networks of production and consumption. Hawkins' final chapter on socio-spatial creativities engages with vernacular creativities. The home, in particular, is presented as an undervalued site of myriad creativities and economic production. Although such vernacular creativities exemplify the further blurring of public-private barriers through (feminine) micro-enterprises and the hobbification of mundane home-making practices, amateur 'doings' can productively ratify the role of ordinary creative processes in the cultivation of home and self.

Throughout Chapters 5 to 7, Hawkins analyses creativity and 'its various politics'. Chapter 5 largely reiterates the extensive economic geography literature on the *spatialities* of creative clusters, while also reflecting upon the *temporalities* of cyclical clusters, whose annual presence within the business calendar operate as pivotal branding extravaganzas. Throughout Chapter 6, Hawkins addresses creativity in community building and asks who benefits from creative initiatives. While cautious of the language of creative neighbourhoods and the effects of large-scale city-rebranding agendas on individual artists, the chapter is largely optimistic. Specifically, it advocates for participatory art practices in bringing different stakeholders together around shared issues, promoting co-production in the consultancy process, and pioneering an alternative realm of politics. Creativity in the city is the final chapter of section two, and is organised around four urban stories. Alongside Florida's well-cited *creative city* and the artist-led *gentrified city*, Hawkins presents the *rewiring of city scripts* through urban explorations, and *subversive urban practices* like skateboarding which exist within, and challenge prevailing socio-spatial norms. Collectively, these stories underscore the tense relationship between creativity and the city and demonstrate how they can support various artful practices and creative atmospheres.

Creativity 'as a force in the world' is the overarching theme of Chapters 8 through 10. These arguably offer the most insightful propositions to creativity's expanding field. In creativity in the margins, a compelling case study of Indonesian street children's use of their bodies (clothes, tattoos) as critical sites of subversive practice is mobilised. Not only do such tales point to creativity's social role in carving out a sense of belonging, but also highlight its political potential in negotiating a precarious marginal existence. The penultimate chapter examines creativity as a geopolitical tool. Certainly, creativities alignment with statecraft is not new, but what Hawkins does do is identify how, in the wake of development's cultural turn, creativity is receiving increasing space in international aid discussions. Dance and theatre especially, are being promoted as capable of assisting post-conflict peace building or cultural intervention in areas

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such as family planning. Hawkins' final empirical chapter returns to landscape and retraces art's role within geographical knowledge making. Since exploration, artists have been central to the *production* of the geographical imagination, and so for Hawkins, a geo-aesthetics might today support geographers in communicating the ambiguities of earth sciences to wider publics, and offer creative methods for tackling the challenges of the anthropocene.

Creativity synthesises an extensive body of research on creative, artful practice, demonstrating its multi-scalar implication, and geographical application, conceptually *and* methodologically. The collection's greatest strength is its emphasis on studying creativity as central to informing intra-disciplinary geographical debates from gentrification and labour to statecraft and identity. The abundant doctorate and practice-based doctorate voices present also affirms the creative strengths of Holloway's Geography Department. However, the largely White, Anglo-American demographics do, in some way, re-enforce the field's Western bias. Moreover, while the collection alludes to the dangers of romanticising creativity as the 'fix-all solution', there remains important space to examine how socially-spatially attentive interventions are to be achieved, and how 'creative entrepreneurs' appropriation by economic and political agendas might be averted. Nevertheless, in sum, *Creativity* is an engaging, multi-disciplinary account into the spatialities of creative practice, production, and consumption.